

Message Text

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41

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-11 ISO-00 NEAE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00

INRE-00 USIE-00 AF-06 SCCT-01 A-01 SY-05 USSS-00 OC-05

CCO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00

NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 OMB-01 ACDA-05 FDRE-00

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O R 031606Z FEB 76

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8470

INFO AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI

AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY AMMAN IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY ATHENS IMMEDIATE

USINT BAGHDAD

AMEMBASSY CAIRO PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS IMMEDIATE

AMCONSUL DHAHRAN

AMEMBASSY DOHA

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MANAMA

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY MUSCAT

AMEMBASSY NICOSIA

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY RABAT

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY SANA

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

AMEMBASSY TUNIS

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USMISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER IMMEDIATE
CINCUSNAVEUR LONDON UK
COMMSIXTHFLT
CTF SIX ZERO
CTF SIX ONE
CTF SIX TWO
CTG SIX ZERO PT TWO
FOSIF ROTA SPAIN
FICEURLANT NORFOLK VA
DIA WASHDC
CIA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 1091

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, PINS, PINT, LE
SUBJECT: LEBANON MARKING TIME IN ANTICIPATION OF DAMASCUS SUMMMIT

1. SECURITY SITUATION IN BEIRUT AND REMAINDER OF COUNTRY REMAINS GOOD WITH SECURITY FORCES NOTING ONLY SCATTERED MINOR INCIDENTS WHICH THEY ASCRIBE, IN THE MAIN, TO PERSONAL MOTIVATIONS.

2. CABINET MET FEB 2 BUT DID NOT MOVE PROCESS OF POLITICAL ACCOMMODATION MUCH FURTHER AND FRANGIE'S MUCH-DELAYED TRIP TO DAMASCUS WAS NOW APPARENTLY SLIPPED TO THURSDAY OR FRIDAY, FEB 5 OR 6. ONE PLAUSIBLE EXPLANATION FOR THE FURTHER DELAY IS MARONITE BALKING DISCUSSED YESTERDAY'S SITREP AND NEED TO REFORMULATE AGREEMENT IN MANNER MORE ACCEPTABLE TO CHRISTIANS. CHRISTIANS ARE APPARENTLY CLAIMING "VICTORY" IN INTERPOSING THEIR OBJECTIONS AND HARDLINERS ARE PLANNING TO SEND DELEGATIONS TO THE U.S., LATIN AMERICA AND ELSEWHERE TO "EXPOSE" LONG-TERM SYRIAN AND PALESTINIAN OBJECTIVES IN LEBANON. DESPITE CHRISTIAN CROWING, HOWEVER, SETTLEMENT STILL SEEMS TO BE ON TRACKS AND PRIMIN KARAME ANNOUNCED, AT END OF CABINET SESSION YESTERDAY, THAT FRANGIE-ASAD-KARAME SUMMIT WILL PRODUCE COMMUNIQUE UNDERLINING LEBANON'S "SECURITY AND SOVEREIGNTY"--A FORMULATION THAT IS BEING INTERPRETED AS INDICATING THAT LEBANESE-SYRIAN AGREEMENT WILL CONCENTRATE ON SYRIAN
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GUARANTEES OF PALESTINIAN BEHAVIOR. ALONG SAME LINES, FRANGIE REPORTEDLY OPENED CABINET MEETING WITH ASSERTION THAT HE AND KARAME HAD SATISFACTORY ASSURANCES FROM SARG ON PALESTINIAN QUESTION. ANNOUNCEMENT OF POLITICAL REFORM PACKAGE STILL ANTICIPATED FOLLOWING FRANGIE'S RETURN FROM DAMASCUS.

3. SYRIAN FONMIN KHADDAM IS BRIEFLY OUTSIDE LEBANON

BUT IS EXPECTED TO RETURN FEB 3. PRIOR TO HIS DEPARTURE MONDAY, KHADK DAM HELD A MEETING WITH KAMAL JUMBLATT. PRESS ALLGEGES KHADDAM REQUESTED JUMBLATT'S FULL SUPPORT FOR SYRIAN INITIATIVE, BUT UNOFFICIAL SOURCES INFORM US THAT DEMARCHE WAS MORE IN NATURE OF A DEMAND. JUMBLATT CONTINUES HIS FANCY FOOTWORK BEHIND THE SCENES AND IS APPARENTLY NOW SEEKING TO HAVE PRIME MINISTERSHIP AND SPEAKERSHIP OF PARLIAMENT DESIGNATED MERELY AS MUSLIM POSITIONS (A CHANGE WHICH COULD CONCEIVABLY OPEN THE WAY FOR A DRUZE INCUMBENT WITH YOU-KNOW-WHO FIRST IN LINE). IN RETURN, JUMBLATT IS REPORTEDLY PREPARED TO DROP HIS INSISTENCE ON "PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION" IN PARLIAMENT AND CONCEDE MARONITE CLAIMS TO THE PRESIDENCY. WHAT-EVER PRESSURE THE SYRIANS MAY HAVE BROUGHT TO BEAR, THEY WILL NOT BE PLEASED THAT JUMBLATT HAS APPOINTMENT MORNING FEB 3 WITH 'ALI GHANAM, DELEGATE OF THE BAATH PARTY OF IRAQ, WHO BLEW INTO TOWN IN WAKE OF JAN 31 ATTACKS ON IRAQI-FUNDED NEWSPAPERS (SEPTEL). ATTACKS HAVE NOW DRAWN VICIOUS DENUNCIATION OF SYRIA FROM BAGHDAD RADIO.

4. LEBANESE CAPTIAL IS, OF COURSE, BUZZING WITH REPORTS OF POLITICAL POSTURING AND CAMEL-TRADING ON ALL SIDES, BUT WE DO NOT AT PRESENT BELIEVE THAT ANY OF THE MINOR ISSUES MENTIONED HAVE BLUNTED THE THRUST OF SYRIAN-INSPIRED SETTLEMENT. THORNY ISSUE OF WHAT TO DO WITH LT. AHMED KHATIB, LEBANESE ARMY DESERTER TURNED "DARLING" OF THE MUSLIMS AND THE LEFT, IS, FOR EXAMPLE, APPARENTLY TO BE HANDLED WITH TYPICAL LEBANESE FINESSE --HE WILL BE GRANTED EXTENDED LEAVE DATING FROM THE DATE OF HIS DESERTION AND THE FUNDAMENTAL QUESTION OF MUTINY WILL SIMPLY VANISH. THIS IS THE LEBANON THAT VETERANS OF THE PAST KNOW AND LOVE; WITH SYRIANS STILL HARD AT WORK AND LEBANESE SENSE OF THE ABSURD EVIDENTLY RETURNING

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SLOWLY, THERE IS SOME JUSTIFICATION FOR HOPE THAT A LASTING POLITICAL CONSENSUS CAN BE HAMMERED OUT, DESPITE THE SLIPPAGE WE ARE WITNESSING.

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Margaret P. Grafeld
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